

In Reply Refer To:

1792 (930)  
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Dear Reader:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Wyoming State Office, is proposing a pilot project to provide suitable pastures for unadoptable wild horses. The attached document provides more detail about this proposal and serves as notice of the beginning of the environmental analysis process to fulfill the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. If you are interested in participating in the process and have concerns, issues, or alternatives you would like to see addressed, please respond with your written comments by April 12, 2001. If you do not submit written comments, your name will be removed from the mailing list for this project. Send written comments to:

Address: Wyoming State Office (WY930)  
P.O. Box 1828  
Cheyenne, WY 82003-1828

Email: state\_office\_wymail@blm.gov  
(please reference Wyoming Wild Horse Pilot Project)

Written comments in response to this notice, including the names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BLM Wyoming State Office during regular business hours (7:45-4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday (except Federal holidays) after the comment period closes and may be published as part of the environmental process. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name and/or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

More information about the proposal is available on the web at <http://www.wy.gov/currentnews/wildhorses/WILDHORSEADOPTION.HTML#whdocs> or by contacting the BLM at the above address or you may call 307-775-6097 or 775-6093.

Sincerely,

/s/ Alan R. Pierson

Alan R. Pierson  
State Director

Attachment

## **Scoping Notice**

### **Wyoming Wild Horse Pilot Project**

Bureau of Land Management  
Wyoming State Office

#### **Description of Proposal**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Wyoming State Office, is proposing a pilot project to provide suitable pastures for unadoptable wild horses. This pilot project includes a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Wyoming State Grazing Board (WSGB) and the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) to convey the responsibilities of each of the parties involved with this pilot project.

Unadoptable wild horses are wild horses gathered from public and private lands in Wyoming that were made available for adoption using the normal procedures, but are not in demand due to age and/or other conditions. These horses are usually older than 5 years old, and in the case of males, have been gelded. The WSGB will directly encourage private landowners with land and facilities that meet BLM qualifications, to accept unadoptable wild horses. These landowners would be required to provide a safe and humane pasture or rangeland home for these horses for the remainder of their natural life under the periodic supervision of the BLM or their designee. There would be no transfer of title for these horses. An individual landowner can adopt a maximum of 60 horses, ten of which they can choose, the remaining 50 will be chosen by the BLM from a pool of older horses. The landowner would receive a onetime payment for any horses over the initial 10. To receive this payment the landowner must adopt a minimum of 11 horses.

#### **Background**

The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act requires the BLM to protect, manage, and control wild free-roaming horses and burros on public lands at population levels that assure a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship. The primary purpose of herd management is to protect both the animals and their habitat. Wild horse herds increase at relatively high rates due to the lack of natural predators. When populations of wild horses, wildlife, or domestic livestock exceed the capabilities of their habitat, the environment begins to decline and there is no longer a thriving ecological balance. If the decline in the environment is prolonged, it leads to poor rangeland condition and accelerates a decrease in the health of the animals. If animals are not removed from this declining range, the animals could be injured or die from starvation, dehydration, or succumb to the elements. The above Act allows the BLM to remove excess above the population objective

level to prevent the unnecessary harm to the animals before these above described conditions occur.

Normally, wild horses removed from the public lands are placed in private maintenance (adoption) through the BLM's Adopt-A-Horse program. The wild horses and burros are prepared for adoption at BLM operated holding facilities. Animals newly arrived at these holding facilities are examined, sorted by sex, age and condition, tested for infectious diseases, vaccinated, and treated by a veterinarian. The animals are also freeze marked on the neck to allow identification. These holding facilities are designed to provide humane, short-term care, but have space limitations that control the number of horses that can be in the facility at any one time. Additionally, the space available in these holding facilities controls the number of excess horses that can be gathered during certain periods of time. Excess wild horses that have not been adopted because of age or other factors have, in the past, been placed on private land sanctuaries in South Dakota and Oklahoma. Existing sanctuaries are now near capacity; however, new areas are currently being developed. One concern of these sanctuaries is the annual cost to house a wild horse (\$450 per head per year in 2000).

This proposal is a method the BLM can use to determine if more incentive can be provided for adoption of previously unadoptable wild horses. An evaluation of this pilot project would be conducted by the BLM one year after initiation to determine viability.

### **Relationship to Land Use Plans**

The BLM, as a Federal Agency within the Department of Interior, is required to conduct land use planning and development according to the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The removal of excess wild horses is addressed in all BLM land use plans written for lands which contain wild horse herds. The placement of excess wild horses into private land sanctuaries is not subject to BLM land use planning regulations. The Proposed Action does comply with the goals of the Strategic Plan For The Management of Wild Horses and Burros On Public Lands of June 1992. These goals include perpetuating and protecting viable wild horse populations and their habitat, and ensuring humane care and treatment of excess wild horses.

### **Compliance with Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans**

The following statutes and resultant regulations are of primary concern to this environmental assessment:

- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended.
- The Wild Free-Roaming Horse And Burro Act of 1971, as amended.
- Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations-4700.

The Proposed Action does not conflict with any known State or local planning or zoning ordinance. This action is not specifically addressed in any county's plan; however, the proposal would be consistent with the land uses occurring within the areas where the wild horses will be released.

To comply with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations which implement NEPA, BLM is required to conduct environmental analyses. This scoping notice initiates the environmental analysis process and will serve several purposes:

1. Provide the public and governmental agencies with information about the proposal.
2. Allow the public and agency officials an opportunity to identify and determine the significance of potential environmental consequences of the proposed action.
3. Identify practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the proposed action.

### **Land and Resource Management Issues and Concerns**

A BLM interdisciplinary team (ID Team) of resource specialists will be involved in the analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives. Because this proposal is predominately administrative in nature, so far the ID Team has not identified any environmental impacts that differ from the existing situation. For example, the private lands that would be involved are already under grazing management systems.

### **Public Participation**

Public input is important in establishing the level and scope of the analysis. BLM is requesting the public's help in identifying the level of analysis needed, alternatives for analysis, other issues or concerns that should be analyzed, mitigative opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process. BLM encourages your comments. Your comments are due by April 12, 2001. Please send your comments to:

Address: BLM - Wyoming State Office (WY930)  
P.O. Box 1828  
Cheyenne, WY 82003-1828

Email: state\_office\_wymail@blm.gov  
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The BLM has scheduled two open houses to discuss this proposal. They will be held in Cheyenne on March 28, 2001 at Little America in the Rouge Room, and in Casper on March 29 at the BLM Office, 2987 Prospector Drive. Both will run from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm.

### **Initial Mailing List**

The scoping notice initial mailing distribution includes, but is not limited to, the following agencies, individuals, industries, organizations, and media:

#### **Government Offices**

Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming State Office (910, 912, 920, 930)  
Bureau of Land Management, Kemmerer, Rock Springs, Pinedale, Rawlins, Lander, and  
Worland Field Offices  
Office of the Governor  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wyoming State Clearinghouse  
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Cheyenne, Green River)

#### **Elected and Other Officials**

All State Senators  
All State Representatives  
All County Commissioners  
All County Libraries  
Bonnie Cannon, Representative for Congresswoman Barbara Cubin  
Lyn Shanaghy, Representative for Senator Mike Enzi  
Pati Smith, Representative for Senator Craig Thomas

#### **Public Land Users and User Groups**

Humane Society  
Fund for Animals  
ISPMB  
Animal Protection Institute  
Doris Day Animal League  
Animal Defense Fund  
American Mustang & Burro Association  
Taurus Production  
IDA  
Other Wild Horse Advocacy Groups

Shoshone-Arapahoe Joint Tribal Council  
Northern Ute Tribal Council  
Shosone-Bannock  
Sierra Club, Northern Plains and Wyoming Representatives  
Rock Springs Grazing Association  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
National Wildlife Federation  
Wyoming Wildlife Federation  
Wyoming Outdoor Council  
Wyoming Public Lands Council  
Wyoming Wool Growers Association